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Summary of Discussion

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The theme for NASSS 2009 was "Americanism and Social Justice." The discourse for "Americanism" began its usage after American Independence in the late 18th Century, and later was employed as cultural and political logic to unify the American people. However, this discourse has undergone significant changes and has been infused with a variety of differing implications over the course of history. Perhaps we can say that it is a historical discourse in which different logic has been continually applied by each disputant. On the other hand, the concept of "Social Justice" has greatly changed its connotation as well, depending on the era and argument. "Social Justice" has not simply been a philosophical problem, but even considered as a social concept which stipulated the way American society existed. If that is the case, how has "Social Justice" been perceived at each given time and how has the concept correlated with the discourse of "Americanism"?

If we consider that "Americanism" and "Social Justice" contain such diversified substance, it makes much more sense to initially ascertain or unravel the various meanings hidden within these terms. Furthermore, if we examine how these concepts are employed today, it may be possible to shed light on the state of present day American society.

I believe that this is the reasoning behind the selection of the theme of "Americanism and Social Justice" for NASSS 2009. This theme was circulated among the three keynote speakers from abroad, as well as becoming the scholarly focus of the three Japanese researchers during the plenary session that occurred on July 25th, 2009. Summarized comments from the keynote speakers and commentators will follow below.

Our first paper was presented by keynote speaker Professor Eric L. Muller from the University of North Carolina, School of Law at Chapel Hill. In a paper entitled "Americanism Behind Barbed Wire" focusing on the issue of Japanese American internment during WWII, he offered a stimulating argument which demands a revision of the prevailing understanding on this issue in particular, and also of Americanism in the 20th century in general.

Professor Muller first gave a brief sketch of the development of Americanism in the first half of the 20th century. Throughout this period, a fervently assimilationist Americanism, epitomized by Theodore Roosevelt at the turn of the

century, and a norm of good citizenship that rejected all foreign attachment, was predominant except in the brief period of pre-WWI years when cosmopolitan progressives raised an articulate voice preaching the preservation of cultural differences. World War II was the high-water mark of this long-growing racial nativism in the conception of Americanism during which race was so powerful a determinant of Americanism that Japanese Americans, including even the *Nissei*, who held birthright citizenship under the U.S. Constitution, were stripped of the rights of citizenship and treated as destructive enemy aliens.

According to Professor Muller, however, it would be a mistake to view this ugly racial nativism as defining the entirety of the U.S. government wartime approach to Japanese Americans. It is true that the genesis of the government's removal and detention of Japanese Americans was coarsely racial, but events quickly pressed government agencies into territory where different and broader conceptions of Americanism could flourish. What especially captured the Professor's attention was the position by the War Relocation Authority (WRA), the civilian agency mainly in charge of the oversight of detained Japanese Americans.

By the end of 1942, a complex set of pressures from several sources arose which demanded the granting of liberty for some internees, and that required government agencies, including the WRA, to evaluate the loyalties of individual Japanese Americans. As Professor Muller argued, in adjudicating their allegiances, the civilian WRA, in contrast with the military which remained firm in its racial nativism, maintained a conception of Americanism that at least attached no strong negative valence to certain Japanese cultural, linguistic and religious practices. Based on this position, the WRA proved itself able to appreciate the high toll that civil rights violations, caused by months and even years of internment, could take on the Japanese Americans. The WRA was able to understand that protest mounted by the internees could come from a frustrated commitment to the American norm of justice and that it did not need to represent a subversion or repudiation of Americanism.

Professor Muller argued that it is true that the WRA's approach was more fiercely assimilationist than the pre-WWI cosmopolitan progressives would have preferred, and by today's standards, it is not even faintly a model of cultural pluralism, but for a time of "total war", the WRA's position shows unexpected shades of color in the definition of Americanism. In conclusion, he pointed out that an idea of Americanism that tolerated cultural difference even minimally and allowed even a little space for dissent did not entirely vanish after the short-term appearance of pre-WWI cosmopolitan progressives. At the same time, the Professor's argument also reminded the audience that the notion of Americanism has been always diverse and contested in history, and remains so even now.

Our second speaker was Professor Marie Gottschalk, from the University of Pennsylvania. She presented the fact that today the United States has become the world's warden, incarcerating a higher proportion of its people than any other

country. The US is also distinctive for its enthusiastic embrace of harsh and degrading punishments that would be unthinkable in most other industrialized countries. In a paper entitled "City on a Hill, City Behind a Wall: Criminal Justice, Social Justice, and American Exceptionalism," she tried to sketch the damage on social justice and democracy in the U.S. inflicted under a carseral state that is unprecedented in history.

Professor Gottschalk first extensively introduced dark aspects of a vast carseral state during the last few decades: the disenfranchisement of prisoners, nonincarcerated felons and ex-offenders which has decisively skewed the outcomes of elections, including Bush vs. Gore in 2000. She also introduced the burdens that mass imprisonment has conferred on the most disadvantaged members of American society, resulting in a negative spiral of pushing them further to the political, social, and economic margins. She also talked about the aggravation of "governing through the crime"—technologies, discourses, and metaphors of crime and criminal justice have been migrating to all kinds of institutions and public policies that seem afield from crime fighting. Her graphic depiction made the audience clearly recognize that the creeping evils under a carceral state has been devastating the everyday lives of a wide range of the U.S. population in terms of equality and justice, as well as eroding the soundness of democratic society.

Could any favorable change be expected to occur despite the current situation? Unfortunately Professor Gottschalk's prospect was dire due to the following reasons: First, bold new social movements and political leaders have yet to emerge to create and sustain political momentum over the long haul needed to challenge the carceral state. Moreover, we should be cautious about automatically assuming that the current economic distresses and tight budgets will unhinge the carceral state. Considering the compelling economic development arguments in favor of mass imprisonment, the massive incarcerated population becomes invisible in macroeconomic indicators that make the U.S. economy look more successful than it actually is. A Keynesian, stabilizing effect in an economic downturn, such as expanding corrections and law enforcements, gives a boost to opportunities of employment nationally. Finally, uneasiness in public opinion toward crime and disorder under the current depression, results in broad support for "governing through the crime", especially when politicians and public officers consistently have tended to exploit this public sentiment for political gain.

In the end, she warned that the carceral state, like the vast military-industrial complex in 1960s, has quickly insinuated itself into the political and economic fabric and is already beginning to fundamentally alter how key social and political institutions operate and to pervert what it means to be a citizen in the United States. It also is cleaving off wide swaths of people in the U.S. from the promise of the American Dream or American Creed, and the political consequences of this are potentially explosive since the American Dream arguably has been the central ideology, serving as a social glue holding together otherwise disparate groups.

Our third keynote speaker, Professor Werner Sollors, from Harvard University, made a presentation from a background of linguistics and American literature, entitled "Multilingualism in the United States: A Less Well-Known Source of Vitality in American Culture as an Issue of Social Justice and Historical Memory." In this paper, he tried to depict the problems and potentialities of multilingualism and diversity, giving consideration to its rivalry with opposing movements in favor of unity and integration.

Professor Sollors' talk took its point of departure from giving an overview on the current signs of multilingualism, focusing on the academic and educational fields as a case example. Migratory flows of people with a wide range of cultural background stimulated by the development of globalization have supported the growth of various versions of multilingualism in higher education after a lengthy decline in foreign language learning beginning in the 1960's. In the past decade or so, the flowering of multilingualism has encouraged the study of heritage and minority languages and contributed to the diversity of language courses in U.S. campuses, with Spanish by far the most popular among students. Based on the signs previously mentioned, Professor Sollors offered an optimistic prospect on the development of multilingualism and its related activities in the years and decades to come.

At the same time, Professor Sollors did not forget to point out that this desirable projection should not detract our attention to ongoing political issues of language rights—also issues of human rights insofar as they are affected by language barriers and language bans. As an illustration, he talked in detail about pending problems related to municipal language services, the multi- and bilingual education of children, and, among other things, the appointment of court interpreters for non-English speaking defendants. In all of these issues, social justice has always been at stake in a fierce clash between the modern English-only movement, most notably U.S. English, born in 1983, and liberal organizations such as the Linguistic Society of America and the American Civil Liberties Union. Even now the struggle continues to exist on a precarious balance due to recurrent challenges by conservative movements.

Historical perspectives, Professor Sollors pointed out, might give clues to breaking out of the impasse. The United States had a multilingual past, and it is hoped that a greater awareness of this past, by awakening historical memories (a mission the LSA and ACLU have been devoted to), would lead to people's deepened understanding of the de facto multilingual present. As an example of a similar attempt, Professor Sollors introduced a project at Harvard University which has collected written cultural expressions in America from the 17th century to today in languages other than English. The Professor hoped that the project and its works will not simply stimulate a better understanding of America's multilingual present in light of the past, but more importantly, will become the beginning of a vast undertaking that will require much international cooperation, linguistic boundary-crossing and so forth. He hopes that it will inspire foreign

scholars and students to explore multilingual creativity, past and present, and also to take up the study of a new language or to support the struggle for the language rights of others.

After the presentations by the keynote speakers, our three Japanese commentators made their respective comments as follows.

Our first commentator, Professor Furuya Jun, political scientist at the University of Tokyo, applauded the contributions by the three keynote speakers from differing academic background in helping the audience comprehend significant changes in Americanism in the course of the last decade. Americanism, which brought about conformism and coercion under jingoistic nationalism caused by 9/11, recovered to earlier pluralism and tolerance, but with some alterations after the election of Barak Obama. The notion of social justice has also greatly altered accordingly from a strictly binary opposition between good and evil to a more nuanced and pluralistic one.

Professor Furuya then offered the following questions or comments to each speaker in relation to the understanding above. To Professor Sollors he asked: does the pressure of the international market, growing suspicion by mainstream Americans toward the so-called illegals, and increased mobility, both nationally and abroad, which forces immigrants into use of English, constantly erode the class basis of multilingualism? Under the circumstances, how does Professor Sollors conceive the link of multilingualism to the socio-economic realities that confront linguistic minority groups in the U.S.? To Professor Muller, he commented that the military's attitude on the issue of the Japanese American loyalty problem resembled that of the Bush administration toward Islamic American citizens. In contrast, the position taken by the civilian WRA in WWII can be connected to the old cosmopolitan progressive Americanism, which, in turn, feeds into Obama's vision of the American future, though Obama is far more tolerant than the WRA ever was. Finally, he asked Professor Gottschalk in light of what he believes to be the fact that the economic and political dimensions of the problems of crime are so closely intertwined, equally shaping the basis of crime, did her conclusion not attribute the growth of a carceral state disproportionately to political causes? And in relation to it, should we not attach more importance to a "root cause" approach to a carceral state, which is directed against ameliorating structuring problems like widespread poverty, high unemployment, dysfunctional schools, and an ineffective health-care system?

Our next commentator, Professor ARA Konomi, an expert on American literature at Ritsumeikan University, first offered the following unique comments on the global implication of the advent of the Obama Administration, amplifying Professor Muller's observation that the role of race in America is undoubtedly waning with the historic election of Barak Obama.

In light of Obama's multiracial and multicultural background, which makes him a brand new breed of American, it cannot be too overemphasized that a man

of this mixed heritage was elected as a leader of the world's preeminent superpower in a currently increasingly multicultural world of global independence. What he really represents is something much broader and significant than either merely "the end of White America" or "the Beginning of Black America", but the possibility of much-needed real change in global racial attitudes. The timely ascendancy of Barak Obama has given us the hope and promise to encourage people everywhere, including the U.S., to scrutinize global issues of race, ethnicity, culture, and society not in a dichotomist way, but with compound eyes. In this sense, she argued, the role of race is positively waxing under the fledgling age of "the global ethnicity", as opposed to the position of Professor Muller.

With regard to Professor Sollor's paper, Professor Ara admired that his project on multilingual writings at Harvard greatly enriched American literature and is truly revolutionary in widening the concept of it. In her eyes, the traditional position in favor of the use of hyphens in the categorization of American literature—African-American literature, Native-American literature and the like—have done nothing but degrade and impoverish it.

In conclusion, based on a deepened understanding of new racial attitudes and movement toward change in the United States, which the audience obtained through these three keynote speeches, she put forward a positive observation that the world is now more liberated than it ever has been, and shared a promising hope that the changes taking place in the U.S. will radiate outward and work for a better world and future.

Our last commentator, Professor Sakai Keiko, Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, talked about "injustices" reflected in the United States foreign policy toward the Middle East from the background of the region's politics. She first pointed out the intriguing fact that acts as a clue to understanding this issue that for the U.S., social justice is not only a domestic issue, but also a global concern. It is always a matter of concern for the world outside the U.S. whether migrants to the U.S. are well treated or not. The U.S. is expected to treat Asian, Arab, and African nations with justice in international relations. Thus, non-Americans are always concerned about U.S. foreign policy toward the non-Western world.

The Middle East is not exceptional in this respect, she argued, but unfortunately people from that region talk most frequently about injustices of the U.S. which she went on to discuss in detail. The injustice here is often described as a "double standard," a different gauge followed by the U.S. in judging Israel and Arab-Muslim societies in its diplomacy, especially salient in its attitude toward the Palestinian issue. It is understood that U.S. injustice in this region was a product of differences in national ideology in the 1960s—Arab nationalism vs. American liberalism, anti-colonialism vs. imperialism and socialist policy vs. U.S. capitalism. Since the late 1970's, foreign policy has been based on differences in religion and beliefs which deny the possibility of any political negotiation and exacerbated the dichotomous framework of the conflict. Throughout the last half

century, the U.S. view on the Middle East has been deeply influenced by *Orientalist* ideas or the Christian concern for important biblical sites in this region.

Professor Sakai's remarks offered in her closing statement made the audience all the more pessimistic on future developments of this issue. According to her, when the U.S. administration plans diplomatic policy concerning the Middle East, it often relies on information and reactions from its own immigrant communities. However since immigrants from Arab and Muslim countries have come to U.S. mainly as political refugees or to flee from the control of oppressive regimes, their personal political purposes generally run against those of their countries of origin. Therefore, the U.S. administration might be dissuaded by their demands from having direct contact with the region's governments, or even might be encouraged to take military action against the immigrants' country of origin, all of which again would sharply demonstrate U.S. injustices in the eyes of people in the Middle East.

Above are the summaries of the three keynote speeches and the comments on them. As aforementioned in the opening remarks, historically the concepts of "Americanism" and "Social Justice" have contained diversified logic. For example, the debate on "Social Justice" has included conflicting viewpoints as to the exact meaning of "Social Justice". The fact that "Social Justice" in America is pointed out as being a "Double Standard" when viewed from the outside might well signify complexity of the concept of "Social Justice". On the other hand, the intense controversy that surrounds the notion of "Americanism" was also pointed out by all three keynote speakers.

What is "Americanism"? What is "Social Justice"? And in what direction will these two concepts evolve as logic to ensure American unity in the future? The answers to these questions were not forthcoming during NASSS 2009. Nevertheless, that does not necessarily devalue the entire session: the three keynote speeches, followed by comments and discussions on them, contributed to revealing the complexity of the concepts "Americanism" and "Social Justice", and offering many invaluable suggestions for the audience in assessing more accurately the present state of American society.